



Frequently Asked Questions

Regulatory Amendment 9 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

August, 2011

What are the issues addressed in Regulatory Amendment 9?

- Harvest restrictions implemented through recent amendments to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan have resulted in some reduced quotas and effort shifts causing derby-fisheries for black sea bass, gag, and vermilion snapper to develop. The potential also exists for a derby fishery to develop for gag.
- A new recreational annual catch limit for black sea bass was reached very early in the 2010/2011 fishing season.
- Additionally, the quota for greater amberjack has never been met under the current trip limit of 1,000 pounds (lbs) gutted weight (gw); therefore, optimum yield is not being achieved.

What is the main objective of Regulatory Amendment 9?

- The primary goal of Regulatory Amendment 9 is to prevent the progressive shortening of fishing seasons for black sea bass (recreational sector), gag, and vermilion snapper (commercial sector), and to improve per trip yield for commercially harvested greater amberjack.

Will measures in Regulatory Amendment 9 prevent the recreational fishing season for black sea bass from being closed early as it was in 2010/2011 season?

- Regulatory Amendment 9 reduces the bag limit for black sea bass from 15 fish per person to 5 fish per person. This measure became effective June 22, 2011.
- The black sea bass fishing season is from June 1 through May 31 each year. This bag limit reduction will likely extend fishing opportunities for the recreational sector through the middle of March, which is a month longer than the recreational sector was able to fish for black sea bass in the 2010/2011 season.



What are the other management measures included in Regulatory Amendment 9?

- A trip limit of 1,000 lbs gw for gag.
- A trip limit of 1,500 lbs gw for vermillion snapper.
- Increase the trip limit for greater amberjack from 1,000 lbs gw to 1,200 lbs gutted weight.
- These trip limits became effective July 15, 2011.

The proposed rule contained an action to split the commercial black sea bass quota into two six-month seasons (June-November and December-May). Why was that action not approved for implementation?

- During the last several years, the commercial quota for black sea bass has been met and the commercial sector closed prior to the arrival of pregnant female right whales off the South Atlantic states. As a result, the early closures of the commercial sector for black sea bass may have provided some protection to right whales.
- Saving a portion of the commercial black sea bass quota for the December-May season would result in the presence of numerous vertical black sea bass pot buoy lines within the endangered northern right whale migration route during the time of year when the whales are transiting off the Southeast coast.
- Though no marine mammal interactions with black sea bass pot gear have been documented, allowing an increased risk of right whale entanglement is inconsistent with the goals of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and recent scientific information that suggests they are more vulnerable to entanglement in Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic fisheries than previously thought.

Can the split season commercial quotas for black sea be considered in the future?

- Yes. NOAA Fisheries Service intends to work with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to further examine the issue of right whale entanglement with vertical lines in the Southeast.



- The Council may then choose to submit a revised action to address a split season quota for black sea bass in another amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

Where can I get more information on actions in Regulatory Amendment 9?

- For more information contact Kate Michie at Kate.Michie@noaa.gov, or at (727) 824-5305.
- Regulatory Amendment 9 may be found online at the following Southeast Region Web site:
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SASnapperGrouperHomepage.htm>